



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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PUBLIC INVITED TO DISCUSS POPULATION STATUS AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR BOBCATS AND RIVER OTTERS

CLEAR LAKE – The population status and potential management options for bobcats and river otters will be discussed at a series of state-wide public meetings.

Both bobcats and river otters have shown substantial population increases in recent years. Bobcat numbers have grown on their own, to the point where the animal was de-listed from the threatened species list in 2003. River otters were first re-introduced in Iowa in 1985 and have grown to the point where their presence has been confirmed in all 99 counties.

Management scenarios for both species will be outlined at the meetings. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is taking comments on a potential river otter trapping season, and a potential bobcat hunting and trapping season. Both seasons under consideration would be limited to certain areas of the state, and have quotas, with the possibility of expanding statewide in the future. Potential harvest of both species also takes into consideration maintaining population growth and distribution throughout the state for otters and bobcats.

Details on potential management scenarios under consideration by the DNR are available at www.iowadnr.com, then click on wildlife. There is an opportunity to send comments directly from the page.

The following information meetings are scheduled. Please note that some of the dates have changed.

Feb. 21, Pin Oak Nature Center, Chariton, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 22, Iowa Lakes Community College, 1900 Grande Avenue, Spencer at 7 p.m.

Feb. 23, F & M Bank, backdoor, alley entrance, 101 East Main St., Manchester, at 7 p.m.

Both species are open to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources depredation policy. For more information, contact Ron Andrews, state furbearer biologist, at 641-425-5088.

Public comment is being accepted throughout the process for both Otters and Bobcats, which seeks final approval by June.

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TIPS TO AVOID PROBLEMS WHEN BUYING A USED ATV, SNOWMOBILE OR PERSONAL WATERCRAFT

By Mike Bonser

Iowa Department of Natural Resources Conservation Officer

The large number of powerboats, personal watercraft (PWC), all-terrain vehicles (ATV), motor-cross (Mx) bikes and snowmobiles purchased and used in state recreation areas is evidence of their growing popularity. These vessels and machines bring a lot of enjoyment when used properly and safely. But before riding the waves, hitting the dirt track or snowy trail, owners can prevent future headaches by learning more about what they are buying and the responsibilities as a buyer.

Since new machines are expensive, many people opt to purchase a used machine to fit their budget and to see if it fits their lifestyle. Buying used can be an excellent choice if the buyer does the research and asks the right questions.

When buying a used recreational machine it is almost as important to evaluate the seller as it is the machine itself. Ask the seller:

- Why are you selling this boat, PWC, ATV, bike or sled?
- Are you the original owner? If not, how long have you had it and how many miles / hours have you put on?
- How was the vessel / machine used? For example, was the boat used for fishing or skiing? On a river or lake? Was the ATV used on trails or for racing or on a farm? Was the snowmobile used for touring or pond skipping?
- How often was the vessel / machine used?
- How long have you been boating / riding / sledding?
- What other vessels / machines have you driven or owned?

- Would you buy another vessel/machine like this one? Why or why not?
- Where has the vessel / machine been serviced? Do you have records?
- What maintenance / service work did you perform yourself? How often?
- Where did you get your parts?
- What after-market parts have been installed?
- Is the registration current and is the title clear?
- What else is there to know about the vessel / machine?

If you are not comfortable with any answers or with the condition of the machine, thank the seller and move on. Also, use caution if considering online auction sales. The Internet enables criminals to easily sell stolen or non-existent machines to unsuspecting buyers. It is truly a buyer beware world when it comes to purchasing a used recreational machine. Remember if the asking price seems too good to be true, it probably is.

To avoid becoming the victim of a sales scam or purchasing stolen property, take the following precautions:

Verify the Registration

Physically examine the registration numbers, tags or plates and match them with the registration documentation. Make sure the seller's name and information matches what is on the documents.

Make sure the registration is up to date. By Iowa law, all registrations must be current and the information up to date before a legal sale can be made (used vessels and machines purchased from out of state can be transferred with an expired registration). It can be costly in terms of time and money for the buyer if this simple piece of paper is not current.

Check the Vehicle-Identification-Number (VIN) or Hull-Identification-Number (HIN) to see if it matches what is on the registration document.

Examine the HIN or VIN to determine if the number has been removed or altered. If the number is not present or appears to have been altered with in any way, do not consider a purchase under any circumstance and contact your local conservation officer or the Iowa State Patrol.

Contact your insurance company for a rate quote using the HIN or VIN. If a loss or stolen property claim has been made against the vessel or machine it may appear here. Contact the manufacturer of the vessel or machine for recall information using the HIN or VIN. Information regarding the motor identification number can be obtained at this time. This will pertain only to those vessels which have inboard or inboard / outboard motors.

Contact local law enforcement authorities to see if the vessel or machine has been reported stolen. Ask to have the check ran by both the registration number and the HIN or VIN.

Verify the title

Iowa law requires titles for:

- Vessels, 17 feet or longer, purchased after Jan. 1, 1988.
- ATVs, or Mx bike registered as an ATV, purchased after Jan. 1, 2000.
- Snowmobiles purchased after Jan. 1, 1998.

The registration of a titled vessel or machine will be stamped “TITLED” and a title number will be included in the document’s information. The title number can be used to ascertain who holds the vessel or machine’s title.

If the vessel or machine is owned free and clear, the owner is required to hand over title or lien to the buyer once the purchase is complete.

If the title or lien is not held by the owner, the seller should contact the financial institution that does. Find out what the amount of the payoff is and make arrangements to have the buyer directly pay the company with check or money order, only giving the seller the difference.

Transferring Ownership

Once the sale has been agreed upon, the buyer needs to read the front *and* back of the registration and title to make sure all the information has been filled out pertaining to the transfer of ownership. A Bill of Sale is also required to transfer.

The Bill of Sale should include the buyer and seller information, a complete description of the vessel or machine (year, make, model, and HIN or VIN), the date of sale and the selling price. Be sure that the required signatures are obtained.

As with the purchase of a new machine, Iowa law states the buyer has only 30 days to register the boat or machine into the new owner’s name. Many buyers of used vessels and machines fail to transfer the registration into their name in a timely fashion. This procrastination often ends with the operator receiving a citation and the vessel or machine is impounded until proper documentation of ownership and registration is produced.

There can be further complications if the new owner waits until after the end of the registration period to transfer ownership. Unlike an ordinary motor vehicle registration, there is no grace period for registering a vessel or ATV / Mx bike. The previous owner will have to be located, the registration will still need to be renewed by that owner, a late registration penalty will be assessed and a citation may be issued to the new owner.

Purchasing a used ATV, boat or snowmobile can be a daunting task. Buying a used vessel or machine from one of the many dealers which are licensed through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources can help alleviate many potential problems, as they should be familiar with the legal requirements and process. State conservation officers can also assist with questions and concerns a buyer may have. By taking some

simple precautions and doing a bit of research, buyers can prevent problems, meet the legal responsibilities and be riding the waves and hitting the trails sooner.

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[Hold Until Feb. 23]

2006 WAS A SAFE HUNTING YEAR IN IOWA

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Hunters in Iowa came through 2005 with one of their safest years on record. Though marred by a tragic fatality in Johnson County, the overall figures continue a several year trend toward fewer incidents. Safety officials say they can pinpoint the obvious reason; Iowa's mandatory hunter education program.

"We do a thorough job of investigating incidents that occur and we take that information and we put it into the hands of our 1,800 volunteer instructors," says Rod Slings, safety education coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "I attribute it their hard work and dedication in getting that education into the classroom."

In 2005, a December 4 shooting took the life of Scott Knebel, of North Liberty, in the first shotgun deer season, near Oxford, in Johnson County. Through the rest of the year, 23 other hunters were injured in shooting incidents. While 2005 figures actually show an upturn, they follow the safest hunting year on record. In 2004, there were no deaths and just 17 injuries. In 2003, there were two fatalities and 41 injuries. In 2002, there was one hunting death, with 25 injuries. And though any shooting is one too many, the recent numbers show a trend headed in the right direction. From the mid 1960s through the early '70s there were up to *10 to 20 deaths* and from 60 to 140 injuries in many years. There were more hunters 30 and 40 years ago, but not nearly the number to account for *those* figures.

That's also about the time hunter education classes became mandatory for incoming Iowa hunters. Last year, 11,614 students went through 403 classes around the state learning everything from safe firearm handling to first aid and wildlife identification. "It's been one of the most successful safety programs on record; reducing the number of hunting related shootings," says Slings. "Whenever you pick up a firearm, you are picking up a responsibility." Still, that hunter education certificate does not guarantee a safe hunt. Shooters in 16 of Iowa's 26 incidents (including a couple property damage only cases) had completed the course.

While the fields and woods are much safer these days, there are still breakdowns. You don't have to be a quail hunter in Texas to slip up. In fact, nine of Iowa's 23 injuries in 2005 were similar to the Cheney-Wittington shooting that sparked headlines for a week. "Swinging on game is when the (bird) gets up and the shotgun is swung to the left or right, following that bird," recites Slings. "Make sure you don't violate your zone of

fire; that ‘V’ out in front of you. Also, know where your hunting companions are at all times.”

Any hunter education effort is geared to record no incidents. However, humans aren’t infallible. Several steps can reduce the risk of problems in the field, though. Blaze orange—particularly blaze orange required for upland bird hunters now—makes us more visible through partial cover as a bird or other game animal flushes. The old reliable standard, of course, is knowing where your muzzle is pointed at all times.

“The key is to plan your hunt...and then hunt your plan,” stresses Slings. “If you say you are going to be in a particular area during a deer drive, for instance, *stay* in that area. Remember, the people you choose to hunt with are your family and closest friends.”

Hunter Education Courses Pick Up in March

If you are looking for a hunter education course ahead of spring turkey season, start checking for late winter/early spring offerings. Instructors in many counties offer a course or two, ahead of the April to May gobbler seasons. Most courses are listed on the Iowa DNR website (www.iowadnr.com). Click on safety education, in the upper right corner, then click on ‘hunter’ for a listing of courses in your region.

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TIME TO ORDER TREES AND SHRUBS

AMES – Landowners considering planting some wildlife habitat or preventing soil erosion should act now to order conservation trees and shrubs from the Iowa State Forest Nursery.

“We have excellent supplies of native oaks such as red, white, bur and swamp white along with good quantities of walnut, silver maple and many other species for this spring’s planting season,” said John Walkowiak, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) forestry bureau.

The State Forest Nursery, in Ames, supplies at the costs of production, conservation bareroot seedlings of more than 45 different native tree and shrub species for Iowa landowners to purchase and plant for conservation purposes such as reforestation, soil erosion control, water quality protection and wildlife habitat.

State Forest Nursery conservation trees and shrubs are for sale from \$25 per 100 plants for evergreen species such as pine and spruce to \$37 to \$45 per 100 plants for hardwood trees and shrubs such as oak and chokecherry. The minimum order is 500 plants.

“If you are looking at just starting out in conservation planting you may want to consider planting a wildlife packet of 200 trees and shrubs. The State Forest Nursery has designed special wildlife packets in cooperation with the National Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever and the DNR’s wildlife bureau that includes such species as bur oak, dogwood, pine, Redoiser dogwood, highbush cranberry, wild plum, red cedar, or and others,” Walkowiak said. These wildlife packets sell for \$90.

New this year is a “Create-Your-Own” packet that allows the individual to select up to four different tree or shrub species for \$90. Each species comes in packages of 50.

“For those with a larger backyard, we have a 20 tree and shrub songbird packet of oak, pine, plum, chokecherry, dogwood and serviceberry that was designed in cooperation with Iowa Audubon that sells for \$20,” he said.

These plants are available for home delivery at a cost of \$5 per 100 plants. For more information or to order conservation trees and shrubs from the State Forest Nursery call 1-800-865-2477 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or on line at www.iowatreeplanting.com. The State Forest Nursery accepts personal checks, VISA or Master Card. Trees and shrubs will be available for shipping from early April until May 31.

For more information, contact Walkowiak at 515-242-5966.

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